should consequently be eliminated. However, I do not think this to be a satisfactory solution. We cannot do without the concept of misrecognition, precisely because the very assertion that the 'identity and homogeneity of social agents is an illusion' cannot be formulated without introducing the category of misrecognition. The critique of the 'naturalization of meaning' and of the 'essentialization of the social' is a critique of the misrecognition of their true character. Without this premise, any deconstruction would be meaningless. So, it looks as if we can maintain the concept of ideology and the category of misrecognition only by inverting their traditional content. The ideological would not consist of the misrecognition of a positive essence, but exactly the opposite: it would consist of the non-recognition of the precarious character of any positivity, of the impossibility of any ultimate suture. The ideological would consist of those discursive forms through which a society tries to institute itself as such on the basis of closure, of the fixation of meaning, of the non-recognition of the infinite play of differences. The ideological would be the will to 'totality' of any totalizing discourse. And insofar as the social is impossible without some fixation of meaning, without the discourse of closure, the ideological must be seen as constitutive of the social. The social only exists as the vain attempt to institute that impossible object: society. Utopia is the essence of any communication and social practice.

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LA LANGUE INTROUVABLE

Michel Pêcheux/Françoise Gadet

Michel Pêcheux: Françoise Gadet and I have recently written a book, *La Langue Introuvable*, which concerns the relationship between history, ideology and discursivity and the question of the *langue*, as professional linguists have considered it. As far as we are concerned, the reflection upon ideologies took its point of departure from the early 1960's French problematic of philosophical structuralism, a problematic which was largely organized around the question of the *lecture* (interpretation) of ideological discourses. This problematic, which at that time condensed around Lévi-Strauss, Foucault, Barthes, Lacan, Althusser, and others, not only took the form of a research programme: it was as much a polemical device aimed at the dominating ideas of the time. Three sets of dominating ideas of that time can be mentioned. First, there were the still intact "remains" of a philosophical spiritualism associated with a religious conception of *lecture*. These "remains" extended from literary hermeneutics (which pursued

the "themes" through "works") to the phenomenological conception of the "project" (i.e., the projection of meaning into verbal material by the constituting power of the subject-reader)...In each case, there was actually a theological representation of a *relation* between an origin (God, the Author) and an end (the subject-consciousness) through the Text, which was in turn considered to be a more or less transparent medium of this relation. The more everyday, secularized forms of this theological *lecture*, secondly, were inscribed within the spontaneous sender/receiver figures which were becoming prominent within the human and social sciences under the many forms of "content analysis" of communication. Finally, there was "scientific" objectivism, which reacted to the above-mentioned spiritualism through reference to the *seriousness* of science and, above all, to the Theory of Information. This project sought to "objectively" treat texts as if they were a population of words, upon which one could perform a sort of quantitative, statistical demography.

The philosophical structuralism of the 1960's declared war on these spontaneous or sophisticated forms of *lecture*. It wrote such concepts on its banners as "lecture symptômale" and "discourse theory", and it issued slogans such as "specification of the efficacy of a structure on its effects, through its effects". Marx, Nietzsche, Freud and Saussure were recruited for this struggle over the definition of speaking, writing, listening and reading. As Althusser explained in *Lire le Capital*: "Only since Freud have we begun to suspect what listening, and hence what speaking (and keeping silent) *means* (veut-dire); that this 'meaning' (vouloir-dire) of speaking and listening discloses, beneath the innocence of speech and hearing, the specifiable depths of a hidden level, the 'meaning' of the discourse of the unconscious—that level whose effects and formal conditions are thought through by modern linguistics." Hereby, the strategic link between "the theory of ideology" and linguistic structuralism was clearly established. Since the point was to analyze the unconscious discourse of ideologies, structural linguistics appeared as the scientific means of escaping from the "je ne sais quoi" of literary hermeneutics. If ideological discourses were in fact the myths pertaining to our societies (and comparable to those studied by Vladimir Propp, then Claude Lévi-Strauss), it was thought possible to construct the traces of their invariant structure (the system of their functions) within the combinatory series of their superficial, empirical variations—and thereby to attain something of this structure present in the series of its effects.

The different attempts at discourse analysis which appeared at this time in France—including the programme of Automatic Discourse Analysis on which I have worked since 1967—have sought to achieve this goal through various means. Analyses of discourse tried to deal seriously with moden linguistics, and particularly with the writing of an American linguist, Zellig Harris, providentially titled *Discourse Analysis*. For a considerable time, and following the lead of the French linguist, Jean Dubois, this text served as a concrete scientific reference point for linguists involved in the field of discourse analysis. I shall not discuss here the theoretical, methodological and historiographical results issuing from

this work.* I shall instead emphasize the weak point of the undertaking, such as it appears to me in retrospect, concerning the role we attributed to the notion of dominating ideology. Considering, as we did at the time, that the myths pertaining to capitalist societies constituted their *dominant* ideology, this might have led us to the questions: Does there not exist, within these same societies, other and different myths? Could these myths be reactive, contradictory, antagonistic, and even capable of revealing the existence of dominated ideologies which are subordinate to, yet distinct from, the dominant ideology?

By virtue of a return of logicism in our own practices, these questions were in fact totally by-passed in favour of a theoreticist reference to the "discourse of science" (Historical Materialism, in this case) which was conceived as a *unique* point of antagonism towards dominant ideology. At the time, of course, this was a political question, the pedagogic aim of which was to "free" the organizations of the French workers' movement (above all, the PCF) from the "myths" of dominant ideology by asserting the value of Marxist science. This was the French way of dreaming of an impossible "escape from ideology", of pretending to at last control historico-political reality itself by means of the separation of Science and Ideology (Compare Lenin's slogan: "Marx's theory is all-powerful because it is true"!)

From this point of view, it may be said that Althusser's famous article concerning "ideological state apparatuses" was an attempt at rectification which also provoked an additional blunder, inasmuch as it was almost unanimously interpreted as a work of *functionalist sociology*. In order to understand something of the question of ideology, Althusser stated explicitly that it was necessary to consider the question of ideology from the standpoint of "the reproduction of capitalist relations of production". For various reasons, "reproduction" was immediately interpreted as the eternal repetition of an identical state of affairs, and certain people even reproached him for thus identifying Marxist analysis with a pure theory of social reproduction.

Reconsidering the aim of this famous article, however, one cannot avoid being struck today by the fact that "considering the question of ideology from the standpoint of reproduction" necessarily implies, for a Marxist, also considering ideology from the standpoint of *resistance* to reproduction, that is, from the standpoint of the multitude of heterogeneous resistances and revolts which smoulder beneath dominant ideology, threatening it constantly. It thereby implies considering dominated ideologies—not as preconstituted ideological germs which have a tendency to develop themselves in such a way that they symmetrically substitute for the domination of dominant ideology but, rather, as a series of ideological effects emerging from domination and working against it

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*Editor's note: The most important of Pêcheux's earlier writings include: *Analyse automatique du discours* (Paris, 1969); (with Catherine Fuchs) "Mises au point et perspectives à propos de l'analyse automatique du discours", *Langages*, 37 (mars 1975), pp. 7-80; and *Les Vérités de la Palice: linguistique, sémantique, philosophie* (Paris, 1975), an English edition of which appears as *Language, Semantics and Ideology: Stating the Obvious* (London, 1982). Other relevant publications and commentaries on Pêcheux's writings are included in the appendix of this issue.

through the gaps and the failures within this domination.

Althusser's discussion of "ideological state apparatuses" was *also* very much aimed at this, but probably in an overly opaque or prudent manner. In my view, the movements which developed at the end of the 1960's around school, family, religion, the social division of work, and the relationship to the environment all constitute what I call *ideological struggles of movement.* While these are very much a question of class struggle on the terrain of ideology, they should be thought of not as struggles between classes constituted as such but, rather, as a series of mobile clashes (on the terrain of sexuality, private life, education, etc.) about those processes through which the domination-exploitation of the bourgeois class is reproduced, with adaptations and transformations.

The most important theoretical consequence of this perspective, in my opinion, is that the ideological objects implied within the struggles of movement are necessarily objects of logical paradox. They have the strange property of being both *identical and antagonistic to each other*—analogous to the Ministry of Love in Orwell's *1984*, which is an undertaking dedicated to torture. Such ideological objects as work, sexual pleasure, nature, science or reason cannot be given the status of formal logical objects (if logic is considered here as a discipline of univocal communication). These objects only occur as relations of historically mobile forces, as flexible movements which are surprising because of the paradoxes they entail. These movements function as divided units, somewhat like those two Italian princes who both swore before God: "I want the same thing as my brother", while each murmured under his breath: "I want to get my hands on the town of Turin".

Any consideration of these heterogeneous, contradictory and asymmetric processes implies thinking about their relation to language (through the metaphorical shift of meaning, the paradoxes, the play on words, etc.) Such consideration must also be seen as a *constituent part* of these processes themselves—in this sense, the range of discursivity is inherent in ideological processes. By thus considering the range of discursive materialities as an area of non-connected heterogeneities which are mobile within their contradictions, the perspective of our research programmes has changed drastically since the era of philosophical structuralism. Stressing the discoveries of Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze or Jacques Derrida, discourse analysis is no longer a matter of reconstructing the homogeneous invariants of a structure of ideology (or ideologies). It rather explores this game of mobile discursive heterogeneities which generate the events specific to ideological struggles of movement.

All this, obviously, implies a certain conception of the relationship between historical reality, linguistic materiality and the existence of the subject: it brings into question that comfortable metaphysics which considers classes as autocentric and preconstructed objects, the subject as an active unit of an intentional consciousness, and the *langue* as the instrument of communication of this subject's expressions and actions. In this sense, more than ever before, Marx, Freud, Nietzsche and Saussure are in the forefront. They engage the pretensions of the impossible theory of semantico-pragmatic universals, a theory which

floats on the horizon of our time, like a new dream of domination. This impossible theory is the most recent form of the *langue introuvable* with which linguistics (and not only linguistics) has been obsessed since its beginning.

Françoise Gadet: I should like to begin by mentioning a part-time linguist who, in addition to leading a state, considered the relationship between language and ideology: Joseph Stalin. He is well known among linguists for his paper, "Marxism and Questions of Linguistics", in which he argues about the relationship between language and social classes. As is also well known, he resolves this question by claiming that language is not a superstructure.

Stalin also deserves a reputation as a forerunner of the extended performative. This reputation is suggested by a declaration of Siniawski, a victim of Stalinism who said in front of his judges: "If we translate metaphors into real terms, it is the end of the world. We say 'darkness is falling, it's raining cats and dogs, stars shoot across the sky'. If this actually happened, the world would go to the dogs. When Lenin talked about ideological struggle with our opponents, he used metaphors. Stalin translated those metaphors into real terms, and this is how the horrors of 1937 began."

If one reads metaphors to the letter, language ends up being taken for reality, representing it without distanciation. Established as equivalent to reality, the order of language would thereby be categorical, serious, definite. Meaning would exist in itself, because it would coincide with words in the reality of an ideology. The consequences of such a conception of language are well known in the fields of politics and literature, and so I shall only consider the implications of such a position for linguistics. I should like to explain, from the point of view of a linguist interested in the question of ideology, why Pêcheux and myself dared title a chapter of *La Langue Introuvable*: "Metaphors, too, are worth struggling for". Our conception of the relationship between *langue* and reality necessarily implies a specific conception of *langue* itself, and I think this conception sheds more light on the metaphorical process, inasmuch as it raises questions about the nature of rules within language.

My starting point, metaphor, leads me to consider the topic of linguistic creativity. By "creativity" I do not so much mean the general possibility of language creation, a feature common to all languages, namely, that the language system itself allows historical displacements within the field of possible formulations. I rather wish to question at this point a common-sense conception, which approaches this problem of creativity by relating two forms of oppositions: first, the opposition between word and sentence and, secondly, the opposition between freedom and constraint.

According to this common-sense conception, it is always the word which is considered as the foundation of creativity and freedom within language. Hence, certain examples of creativity are usually mentioned: slips of the tongue, portmanteau-words, puns, metaphors, neology, the poetic play on words, the play on words proper, rhymes, spoonerisms, anagrams, and so on. Here we again encounter a lot of English expressions which assume that expression is a matter of words: to use one word for another, to weigh one's words, without changing a

word, to play on words, looking for words, the right word, the power of words, not afraid of words . . . Most of these expressions, of course, imply the syntactic base of a sentence.

On the other hand, this common-sense conception of language considers syntax as a rigidity factor, a constraint, a limit or filter, as a process by which tight reins are kept on spontaneity. From such a perspective, a psychoanalyst reflecting upon the necessity of an *écriture* of oral material would be forced to say: "Ultimately, syntax is on the side of secondary processes". I think that such a conception of syntax is not only a consequence of an analysis made upon fixed-order languages (e.g., French or English), in which word-order is determined. It is also, and probably above all, a consequence of an imaginary reconstruction of syntax: syntax is considered as a set of imperative rules that assert what is forbidden and what is allowed—rules which take the form of *don't say that, but say this*. Any attack on this order is therefore seen as necessarily a breaking of the rules, a deviation, a standing outside of language.

Some recent works in the field of linguistics suggest the necessity of abandoning this dichotomy beteen word and sentence. Consider, for example, the reseach of Judith Milner, which is concerned with language play. She shows how playing with language negatively reveals something about language, because through the mere possibility of laughing, for instance, one behaves as if one understood something else. Playing with a language is a question of syntactic analysis. This is exemplified in the famous witticism commented upon by Freud: *Tu a pris un bain?* (Did you take a bath?) *Pourquoi, il en manque un?* (Why, is one missing?) There is here a lexical ambiguity between a full expression (*to take a bath*) and the combination of the verb *to take* and the noun *a bath*. But it is the syntactic scheme which allows this play, and consequently the witticism. Milner therefore writes: "I insist upon the fact that most of the time, playing with language, though generally considered as pure lexical ambiguity, involves in fact problems of syntactic analyzability". Similarly, another linguist (again, a woman) is working on the linguistic status of metaphor. Lacan's definition of metaphor as the substitution of one word for another is well known. She shows that this is true, but only because there exists a syntactic frame for the substitution itself. She therefore calls metaphor a fact of language with a syntactic origin. For example, the expression *son colonel de mari* (which could be translated: her colonel of a husband) can only be interpreted by a French speaker as a derogatory or ironical attitude towards colonels, through reference to the expression, *son imbécile de mari*.

These examples indicate the necessity of referring to syntactic structure, considered both as indifferent to, and responsible for, the ideological processes of language. Syntax is the basis of historical creativity. Language rules thus cannot be considered as categorical rules—in the sense that a rule must or must not apply. They must rather be seen as intrinsically allowing for ideological play and discursive latitudes. Consider an especially enlightening example: Roland Barthes' expression, *tricher la langue* (literally: to cheat the language). It is not very interesting to point out that the verb *tricher* is normally intransitive (*tricher*

avec la langue; tricher à un jeu) and that it is transitive in this deviant example. It is much more interesting to emphasize that Barthes uses this verb when defining literature as a work upon language. It is also more interesting to point out that using an intransitive verb intransitively is particularly frequent in some types of discourse. This is especially the case in provocative statements used on electoral posters, as for example in this one recently used against Mitterand:

> Il a avorté nos enfants
> Il avortera la France

(literally: he aborted our children, he will abort France). Neither in the first meaning (to make a woman abort) nor in the second meaning (to make a project abort) can the verb *avorter* be used transitively. By doing so, the deviant statement gains in intensity and even violence.

To what new theoretical consequences do such reflections lead? I think the major point is that the way we think syntactically about a statement always reveals a little bit more about its meaning, because we understand it in relation to other statements, through syntactical plays of forms which are required by the former statement. In the same way, producing such statements implies a position towards language that has been described by Philippe Sollers: "I can't consider as free a being who does not strive to break within him/herself the bonds of language...".

What does this position imply about the status of grammatical rules? We argue in *La Langue Introuvable* that a certain interpretation of Chomsky's work permits such a conception of language. It is well known that one of the most important concepts of generative transformational grammar is the opposition between the grammatical and the non-grammatical. This distinction works more as a way of reasoning than as a device for separating utterances. To separate utterances would be to produce a decision about, or assign a frontier between, *what is grammatical* and *what is not grammatical*. If we assume, to the contrary, that the opposition is merely a matter of reasoning, this necessarily implies taking into account what is impossible within the *langue*, precisely in order to understand what exists within it. In my opinion, the main discovery of Chomsky's work is its comprehension of the relationship between the grammatical and the non-grammatical as a continuum or natural consistency—and not as the *langue* versus its outside, the normal versus the pathological, or the rule versus deviation. Nothing reveals an excluded sequence as excluded, except the fact that it is excluded. Therefore, there is no frontier or assignable point of language shift between the grammatical and the non-grammatical. There is only work within language, in which meaning is defined in relation to what does not make meaning, the meaningless.

To understand Chomsky this way—and I agree this is not the usual way—is in fact to raise the question of a subject's mastery of his/her *langue*: playing with rules is not the same as following the rules of a game. From our perspective, there

is no "deviation"—and hence there is no "poetical" language. There is only a general process of language, working as much in the verbal learning of children, as in the everyday use of language by every speaker, as well as in its political or literary uses. Once again, Barthes presents several examples of this interplay between the grammatical and the non-grammatical. One of them seems to me especially interesting, for it presents an apparent contradiction between his *écriture* and his theoretical position. In the *Leçon inaugurale*, he writes: "In our language, I am compelled to establish myself first as a subject, before expressing the action which, because of this, will only be an attribute of the subject: what I do is only the consequence and outcome of what I am. In the same way, I always have to choose between masculine and feminine, because both neuter and any mixed gender are forbidden to me; or, again, I have to indicate my relation to another person by using either *tu* or *vous*: any emotional or social hesitation is not allowed. Thus, in its very structure, language implies a fundamental relation of alienation." These observations lead him to this famous conclusion: "Language is neither reactionary nor progressive; it is indeed fascist".

In his practice as a writer, Barthes had previously worked out the necessity of deciding on grammatical gender. In *fragments d'un discours amoureux*, in which he quite systematically avoids the discursive engendering of the partners involved in the *discours amoureux*, he uses unmarked terms (*the subject in love; the object of my love; you; we; the other; the other body*) and some nominalizations, such as *the absence, the anguish of love, imposing on my passion the disguise of discretion*. We find here discursive characteristics which, from within language, play with the necessity of language: a *ruse*, if I dare say. But the term ruse seems to imply a notion of strategy. It is, however, not the case that Barthes is the master of what he writes, as if he could translate ideological aims into *langue* or discourse. To make language work is only to play on its constraints and on its blanks—to play with the latitudes it affords.

In *La Langue Introuvable* we attempted to question the strategic position of the language master who seeks to rule over a world of statements through his own process of enunciation. Against the narcissism of successful communication, we tried to assert the historical and political value of failure. The certitude of the American joke and the anxiety of a Jewish wit provide a philosophical illustration of this difference. The joke is the reply of the small American farmer to his pastor when the latter invites him to thank the Lord for having given him such a beautiful land: "But if only you had seen this land in the state in which He gave it to me!" The witticism is the reply of the small Jewish tailor to his unhappy client who had to wait six years for the delivery of a pair of trousers and thereupon remarked that God took only six days to create the world: "All right, but look at the trousers, and look at the world...".

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